

ADDRESS
OF
REV. H. E. NILES,
ON THE OCCASION OF
PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S FUNERAL OBSEQUIES
IN YORK, PA.

PRINTED BY HIRAM YOUNG, YORK, PA.

REV. MR. NILES' ADDRESS,

ON THE OCCASION OF

President Lincoln's Funeral Obsequies IN YORK, PA.

IN accordance with official notice by the Acting Secretary of State at Washington, and a Proclamation by the Chief Burgess of this Borough, the citizens of York (so far as the utmost capacity of the building would allow) assembled in the Lutheran Church, on George street, (Rev. Dr. Lochman's,) on Wednesday, April 19, 1865, at noon, to observe, in concert with their fellow citizens throughout the land, the Funeral of ABRAHAM LINCOLN, President of the United States. The following exercises were held, viz :

Reading of Hymn—Rev. A. W. LILLY, of the Lutheran Church.

Prayer—Rev. J. H. C. DOSH, of the Methodist Church.

Reading of Scriptures—Rev. C. W. THOMPSON, of the Episcopal Church.

Address—Rev. H. E. NILES, of the Presbyterian Church.

Hymn—Rev. W. W. EVANS, of the Methodist Church.

Address—Rev. G. M. SLAYSMAN, of the Baptist Church.

Prayer—Rev. J. O. MILLER, of the German Reformed Church.

Doxology and Benedicition—Rev. J. A. GERE, Chaplain U. S. Hospital.

At the close of the meeting, on motion of S. J. W. MINTZER, Surgeon U. S. Hospital, it was voted unanimously, that the thanks of the congregation be returned to Revs. Messrs. NILES and SLAYSMAN, and that copies of their Addresses be requested for publication.

The Rev. Mr. SLAYSMAN regretting his inability to furnish a copy—heartily concurs in the request of Mr. NILES.

YORK, Pa., April 25, 1865.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from

The Institute of Museum and Library Services through an Indiana State Library LSTA Grant

MR. NILES' ADDRESS.

THIS is an occasion without a parallel. For the first time the business of our whole people is suspended on a bright, sunny vernal day, and badges of mourning are everywhere displayed, and the great heart of a mighty nation weeps because of its murdered head! True, Death has often been in our high places, and wide-spread sorrow has been felt when we learned that his skeleton foot had stalked the President's floor. But, never before was the hand of violence raised against the man whom our American people delighted most to honor. Never before did the assassin's bullet accomplish such a far-reaching, irrevocable, dreadful result.

In other countries, Cæsar had his *Brutus*; James the I., of Scotland, his jealous uncle, *Robert Stewart*; Henry the IV., of France, his *Ravaillac*; Wm. Prince, of Orange, his *Gerard*; and Paul, of Russia, his *deadly foe*. In all these cases, however, it was either personal rivalry, or some plausible desire for restricting despotism and promoting the rights of man, which prompted to the infamous deed. But, in this case, we stand aghast at the foul murder of the President of a great Republic:—of one chosen by the free suffrages of his fellow citizens to preside over a government of the people—to administer laws to which he himself was subject, and in the administration of which (even his own political opponents being judges) he has evinced a spirit of kindness, forbearance and noble self-abnegation without a parallel. It is the murder of a pilot, who, after guiding the ship of State over seas of stormy rebellion, with a coolness, a firmness and a far-seeing sagacity which have been the admiration of the world—had just been re-elected by a grateful people to the same high position; and now, in the beginning of his second term, seemed emerging from the wild storms of Passion and bloody Treason out under a clearer sky, and upon the surface of a smoother sea of returning prosperity.

O, to think of it! that just as the land was ringing with pæans of victory—just as the cup of triumph was in our hands, sparkling in the golden light of peace, from beneath its nectared draught should start up this horrid viper of *assassination* with gleaming eyes and gory crest, and fangs oft dyed with the best blood of the nation, and make a deadly spring at this noblest victim, so that we drop the jeweled cup, and instead of joy and hope, are racked again with terror—To think of it, that he who confessedly wielded the vast power committed to him, with an eye single to the nation's good, who had just been like an impersonation of charity and forgiveness to the recovered centre of rebellion, and had held out to deluded men the Olive-Branch of peace, and had approved the most liberal terms of surrender for an overpowered army of rebels,—who had come

back to Washington that he might arrange the easiest terms of pardon and restoration for all offenders, and whose last official acts had been so marked with gentleness and moderation—To think that he who was so charitable that he could hardly believe other men malicious; so forgiving that he could hardly believe other men revengeful—so confiding that he could not believe the warnings of intended violence—To think that such a President—the foremost man of his age, to whom the eyes of the civilized world were turned as never before—To think that in the very zenith of his greatness, when a victorious army seemed almost ready to come back and lay their trophies at his feet, and four millions of liberated slaves were already celebrating him as their emancipator; and twenty millions of whites, charmed by his patriotism, his integrity, his unaffected goodness of heart, were rejoicing in him as their father, and almost ready to worship him as their political saviour; and, also, when the long deceived nations of Europe were beginning to understand his real excellence, so that even English journals had come to speak of him as equal, if not superior to their own Hampden and their Cromwell—O! to think that *at such a time* he should be horribly, fiendishly *Murdered!* *Murdered* at home, immediately after his safe return from that journey which so many regarded as full of peril! *Murdered* in the capitol of our nation, the scene of his severest labors, the centre of his unequalled glories! *Murdered* in his first hour of relaxation from exhausting cares, in the presence of his wife and before the eyes of admiring thousands who had rushed to that place of public resort to greet him after his triumphant return from those crowning victories before Richmond! *Murdered* in the interest of that “system of abominations” which, for years, has fostered so much jealousy, contention and bloody hate, which has prompted to deeds of cruelty and death towards all whose consciences did not approve of its aggressions; which has converted our national capitol into a theatre of bullyism and outrage, and which inaugurated this terrible rebellion, which will be the wonder of history and the warning for people of all time; *Murdered* on the anniversary of the hauling down of the American Flag from Fort Sumpter: in 1861, and on the very day when that starry banner, borne back with pomp and pageant, was raised again, amid the cheers and tears and prayers of a rejoicing multitude! *Murdered*, also, on that day when Christians are accustomed to celebrate the passion and loving sacrifice of the world’s Redeemer!

O! What language can describe the horrors of that Saturday, when the awful intelligence was flashed along the wires, “Our President has been assassinated! “Our President is only just alive!” “His case is considered hopeless!” “He is dead!” “The loved and honored Lincoln—the man who bore himself so modestly and so kindly that he could not have a personal enemy, has been inhumanely slain!” And what an Easter Sabbath was *that*, when, all over the land, bells that a few days before, had been ringing out their joy peals on the festal air, were tolling the knell of a nation’s Hopes—When flags, which had blossomed out from every win-

dow, in the sunshine of victory, were fringed with a crape—their exultant folds gathered with bands of funeral black—When in all our churches were worn badges of mourning, and hung the drapery of woe ! What a Sabbath, when, instead of swelling anthems of Praise, we called for dirges of Grief, like the pathetic wail of David—“The beauty of Israel is slain on our high places ! How are the mighty fallen ! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph ! How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the Battle ! O ! Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places !”

Fellow-citizens ! It is impossible adequately to express our proper abhorrence of this deed of blood ! Whatever our particular estimate of Mr. Lincoln as a man—whatever our political creed, or previous associations, we must feel that the death by brutal violence, of the constitutional Executive of this great nation, is a crime so base and revolting, as to call down the abhorrent reprobation of the civilized world ! It strikes at the foundations of all order ; and it seems to have been one act in a plot, the full execution of which might have plunged our nation into a state of awful anarchy—as it would have been without a counterpart in the history of this sin-cursed world. But, let us thank God, even in the midst of our tears, that *only to such an extent*, was this scheme of villainy permitted to succeed :—That the other representatives of national authority were saved from the power of assassins, and that the beautiful machinery of our Government moves on with unbroken harmony and resistless force ! Individuals die, but principles live. Rulers are taken away, but the nation which God intends to use, is disciplined, purified and advanced. Doubtless, the Infinite Disposer of events has suffered this startling result to take place at the *best time*, and *for the wisest ends*. It may be, that we shall live to see how *good can come out of this apparent, national calamity* ! Just when *his own appropriate work* was most fully done; just when he had humbled the pride of the most formidable rebellion that ever occurred :—and just before he would have been called to the delicate task of *Restoration and Reconstruction*—*Abraham Lincoln* was removed ! He lived long enough to vindicate his policy in the conduct of the war, and to see the triumph of Constitutional power,—but *not long enough* to make a single mistake in the new field of duty, which was just opening before him.—His death, coming as it did, gave the last finish to that most wonderful—most eventful life ! So far as his own reputation is concerned, it was *just the time* for him to go. His most enthusiastic admirers could not have desired for him an apotheosis, which would more perfectly have rounded out his fame, and encircled his name with a brighter halo, than this martyr’s death !

“Having ascended fame’s ladder so high,
From the round at the top he has stepped to the sky.”

But I must close with some practical reflections appropriate to this solemn event.

1st. What an *exhibition of human wickedness* is here presented before our eyes, in this boasted noon of the 19th century! What a spectacle to the world, and in the sight of Heaven, that in this our gloried land of liberty, intelligence and christian order, a deed of high-handed enormity should be perpetrated, which would have shocked and disgraced the ages of barbarism! O! what a wicked nation ours must be, when to the long catalogue of her martyred sons, must be added this illustrious name, fallen in the sacrifice for popular sins! What occasion then for *widespread repentance before God*; and for united supplications for national forgiveness and purification! What reason, why "the priests, the ministers of the Lord should weep between the porch and the altar saying, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach that the heathen should rule over them. Wherefore should they say among the people, where is their God?"

2nd. What reason have we here, for more deep, determined and *unswerving opposition to Slavery and Rebellion*! This crime is the culmination of that demoniacal spirit, of which we vainly hoped we had seen the worst, in the dragonnades of Union men at the South in the carving of the bones of fallen soldiers into trophies and charms, in the deliberate maltreatment, starvation and murder of thousands of Union prisoners in the death pens at Richmond, Andersonville and other points! It is the final flowering out of that ungovernable insolence which the license of plantation manners inspires; which prompted those brutal assaults in the National capitol, and even on the floor of the U. S. Senate; which broke forth, four years since, in a perfect pestilence of perjuries and treasons coolly perpetrated by men in the Cabinet, in Senators' chairs and in command of the army and navy of the nation:—which flamed out in this most monstrous, most causeless and bloody rebellion; and now when we thought it was ready to respond to overtures of clemency and pardon, turns to wreak its spasm of desperate rage upon the person of the gentlest, purest and most clement of rulers, because he had succeeded with the blessing of God, and the support of loyal citizens, in thwarting its wicked schemes of Secession and Misrule! O, let us have done with this malignant cancer on our body politic. Let us be now, more than ever, determined that Slavery and Rebellion shall die together, as the only security for future peace and national prosperity. Let mistaken leniency come to an end. Let the people sustain the government, demand of the Courts that *Law have its course and Justice be done!* Let us show that we consider human liberty and national integrity and constitutional order so precious, that it will not do for any man to lift a finger against them, be he lofty or lowly; be he general marching at the head of Rebel armies, or a crawling conspirator setting fire to crowded hotels:—be he the assassin of the President or an abettor of such deeds, North or South. Let us quit ourselves like men in defense of those principles of law and order, of freedom and humanity, of virtue and christian love, which the Bible enjoins, and on the basis of which alone, our precious institutions can stand secure!

But finally, in all these duties and trials let us be *careful of our own spirits*, to distinguish between principle and passion; between hatred of *evil* and personal hostility towards any class or kind. At this solemn hour, when America's millions are bowed with bleeding hearts, over the coffin of their beloved President, let us remember that we can most truly honor him by trying to *act worthy of him*.

As he, around whose memory is now forever wreathed the halo of martyrdom, lived in reverent regard for God's authority, so let us be careful to do. Let us remember Him who hath said, "Vengeance is mine—I will repay," and guard against any seeming disposition to take the prerogative out of His all-wise hands. Let us rely on His unerring Providence, to bring to light the projectors and perpetrators of this most awful murder. And, in accordance with the principles which He has established,—through the agency of those "powers that be, that are ordained of God" for the protection of society and the punishment of crime, let us demand that justice be done. Let all murderers, with their accomplices, and all leaders in treason and rebellion, be visited, according to law, with the just and awful punishment which they deserve. But, let no life be taken in the spirit of vengeance. And, for the masses who have been cheated or compelled into this most unnatural and suicidal course, let us, in the spirit of forgiveness, be ready to receive their confessions of repentance, and welcome them back to Loyalty and Union. For the multitudes on both sides who have been called to injury, suffering and bereavement, let us fervently pray. Especially let us pray for that wife of the murdered President, so suddenly made a widow, and those orphaned children who mourn as no others were ever called to do.

Let us pray for him on whom now rests the mighty burden of Executive Responsibility,—that a double portion of wisdom from above may be granted unto him, and that with Jacksonian firmness (nay, with Christian impartiality and fidelity), he may administer his solemn trust. *God Almighty lives*, the Infinite Sovereign of the Universe! far above the reach of hostile bullets or the alarms of bloody war. To Him let our prayers more earnestly ascend in behalf of all who wield influence in our national councils, or who lead the victorious armies of the Union. And, as He has raised up, qualified and preserved this Moses to guide our Israel through the Red Sea of a most bloody and desolating war, let us not doubt that He will appoint the very *Joshua* we need to lead us over and establish us in the happy Canaan of Liberty, Order and Christian Prosperity.

And now, as the funeral train at Washington is about to move, hark to the sobs of agony, which, bursting from the rocky shores of New England, are borne along over Ontario's and Erie's waters, and swell down the Ohio and Mississippi to the crescent city of the Gulf! Hark! to that mighty dirge of the Atlantic, to which so many millions of hearts beat solemn measure, as it peals across the Hudson, over the Alleghanies and the Rocky mountains, until it breaks in a solemn wail of grief on the golden shores of the Pacific:—While fair young *Illinois*, pale with weep-

ing, stretches out her arms to receive to her bosom, the mangled corpse of her most favored son, whose glory will make her name illustrious, and whose ashes will make her soil a shrine for liberty's pilgrims, through all the ages to come !

This day shall be forever sacred in the calendar of our nation. It is, as though there was "not a house in the land, where is not one dead!" This day, when a mighty nation is bowed as by one common impulse of sorrow and shame, shall be remembered as the beginning of increased Union and Loyalty and Fidelity to the truth. Around the coffin of our martyred President, shall a loyal people join hands, (as did the States General of Holland over the remains of their beloved William of Orange) in holy league of eternal enmity against that Treason whose root is slavery, and whose horrid fruit is war, starvation, savage butchery and cold blooded murder !

To-day, shall they pledge themselves anew, amid the music of funeral hymns, to stand by and uphold by their influence, their prayer, their property, and, if need be, their *lives*, the government of these United States by whomsoever administered ; trusting in the *President of the Universe*, our fathers' God, to guide us safely through this whirlwind of confusion and over this sea of blood, into the fair haven of an honorable, a lasting and a glorious Peace.

